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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000131

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [QA](#) [XF](#)  
SUBJECT: QATAR-NATO SHOWDOWN OVER AIR OPERATIONS

REF: A. USNATO 117

- [1](#)B. DOHA 206
- [1](#)C. USNATO 113
- [1](#)D. OLSON/RATNEY TELCON 01 MARCH 07

Classified By: AMB VICTORIA NULAND; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a request for guidance - see para. 5.

2.(C) Summary: A senior Qatari Air Force officer told NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General (DASG) Robert Simmons in Brussels on March 1 that Qatar would assert full jurisdiction over NATO personnel in the ISAF liaison group working at the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at the al-Udeid air base on March 3. This comes in the wake of a breakdown in NATO-Qatar negotiations on the legal status of NATO personnel in the CAOC. It is widely expected that the affected Allies - U.S., UK, Canada and France - will withdraw their personnel when Qatar asserts full jurisdiction on March 3. The net affect will be a degradation of ISAF-CENTAF synergy and a blow to NATO-Qatar political relations. From a USNATO perspective, in the absence of a catalyst to the system in Doha, we are unlikely to get back to the negotiating table. End Summary.

3.(C) In the context of today's NATO-Qatar talks on a possible broad Qatari-NATO cooperation agreement, BGEN ABDULLAH asserted to NATO DASG Simmons that Qatar would assert full jurisdiction over NATO personnel in the ISAF liaison group working at the CAOC at the al-Udeid airbase on the evening of March 3. Simmons told representatives of the five nations potentially affected by this decision - the U.S., UK, the Netherlands, Canada and France - that he had explained to the Qatari interagency group (Qatari Air Force, Foreign and Interior Ministries) that NATO had no judicial authority to discipline personnel and those NATO nations operating in the liaison group considered their personnel covered by bilateral defense cooperation agreements (DCA). When asked by the French NATO delegation, Simmons said France was not singled out in exchanges with the Qatari delegation. Simmons said that he had explained to the Qataris that such an assertion could prompt sending NATO nations to withdraw their personnel from the liaison group and could impact negatively on the prospects for further NATO-Qatari partner cooperation within the context of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). In an aside, he also said that several Qatari officials approached him earlier in the week on the margins of the EAPC Trust Fund meeting in Washington, D.C. to repeat Qatar's interest in hosting the possible NATO Security Cooperation Center for the region. He reminded the Qataris

today that their assertion of jurisdiction may impact negatively on Allied attitudes towards that offer as well.

4.(C) The UK, in reaction to Simmons' report, said that it would withdraw its personnel from the liaison group promptly on a voluntary basis. The Canadians said that they anticipated an instruction from Ottawa to withdraw their one officer from the liaison group, although a second Canadian currently in an exchange program with the U.S. - and accredited to the OEF/OIF portion of the CAOC - likely would stay at al-Udeid under their DCA. The Netherlands said that they currently do not have an officer in Qatar as these issues arose during their rotation of personnel and they currently are awaiting a visa for the otherwise designated incoming officer. The NATO International Military Staff (IMS) said that, in anticipation of the possible withdrawal by sending states of their personnel, NATO was preparing the option to shift liaison functions rapidly to a remote link to the CAOC from Afghanistan so as to prevent a wide disruption in air support to ISAF operations.

5.(C) Request for Guidance - USNATO needs to inform NATO tomorrow OOB whether the U.S. intends to pull our personnel out from the ISAF liaison group, a step we believe is warranted. We also request permission to urge Simmons to advise Qatar that this will have a chilling effect on NATO-Qatar political relations. Per ref. D, Department also may wish to instruct Embassy Doha to approach the GoQ with a similar message.

NULAND